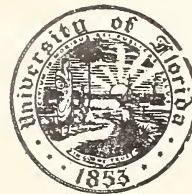


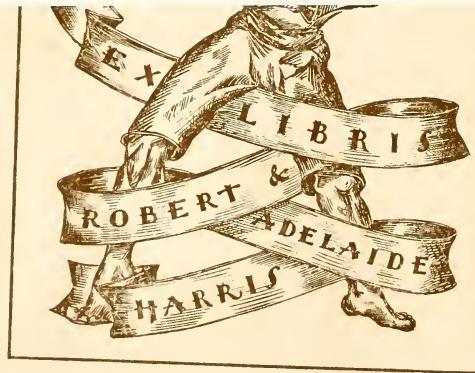
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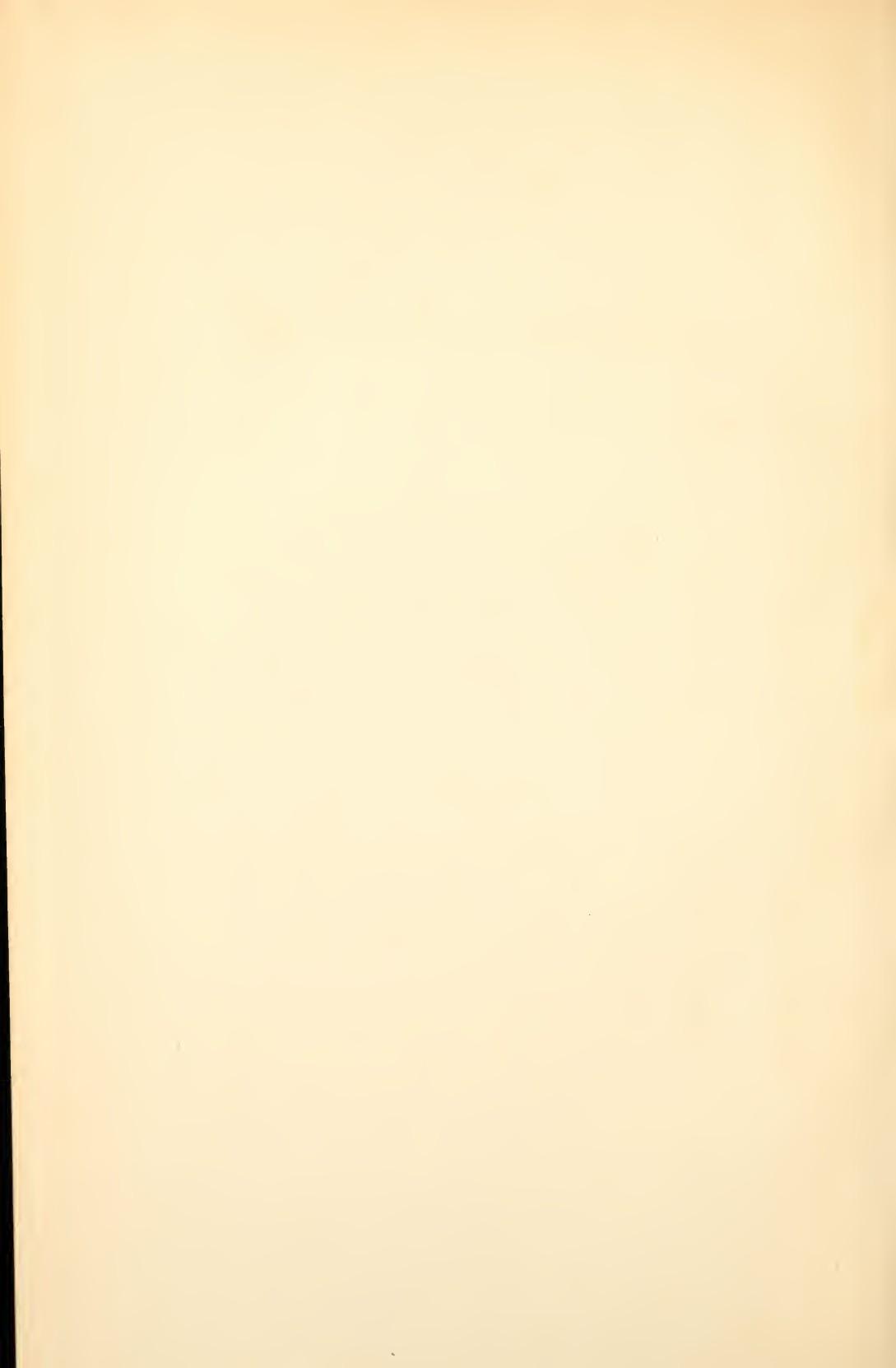


The Gift of
R. J. Harris



R J & A E Harris

February, 1937







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B E F O R E T H E B R A V E



BEFORE
THE BRAVE
BY
KENNETH
PATCHEN

RANDOM HOUSE
NEW YORK



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FOR MIRIAM

1964
Light of X. J. Maxine

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INTRODUCTION

• *when in the course of human events*

Turn out the lights around the statues.
Unlock the vaults of unhewn stone; put down
An order for new men. Place high the value
Of those others: do not forget what they have done.
Do not destroy. They built a world we could not use;
They planned a course that ended in disaster.
Their time is up. The curtain's down. We take power.
We're sorry they left so little. We wonder
If any will say of us: Do not forget. Do not destroy.
We wonder if they will mean it as much as we do now.
Turn out the lights around the statues.
What do you think the dead will wear next year?

• *among ourselves and with all nations*

Chiefly I prize this loss of patience, deep
In riot-days around us; these swollen
Times propel the future forward: tear
Alike my friends and turn about my foes.
I think not every lesson learned

is

Full of welcome: weeds in suburban streets;
Stalking gangs who fire at sight; and ghosts
Marked with print of million moving feet;
—You guess the answer, gather courage:
Wash your linen on the wires of storm

and song

Advertising no shadow hope or unemployed regrets
take care

These withered times prepare no turkish-bath
Of comradeship or endless singing in the square:

The fight goes on, goes out, goes in —
We cannot loiter though legions repeat
The final word of the final orator.
This time is wrong. The fact is law, not tactical.

• *it is for us the living*

Now I commend this body to this earth.

Soon to know the swamps and suns

Shall burn it out or lead it quite away.

Eager: O fathers, how can you hear

with any heart at all

(So laughing; so wise in nowise being hunted

hunting)

How can you hear of journeys taken through your world?

Do you think to stay the tramp of thousand feet?

(no land:

no flag: no past) O should we die in tents

Of anger fouled by ghosts? Do we require blueprints

Of the hand holding knives at our throats? Do we need

More light to see our blood upon your lordly ground?

Do you think we'd buy salvation in the stark

market-places

Where we ourselves were sold? Do we know

another guilt than waiting? and should

You meet us (no land: no flag: no past)

We shall not smother in the wild sobbing heat of it.

- *shall not perish from the earth*

Pitiful twilight-people

O people in the shadow shall not scorn the sun;
Shall not pardon strangers bringing stolen gifts
And gangs all cloaked in purple
Watching splendor perish in song of fashion
And war that paints above the space of graves
The restless runners warring great alone
For glory alike
This end for all: long love and houseless honor.

For hate that holds you bitter
Has need of solid hands to stay such love.
The humble reach of honest hands is savior
At the border of this people's birth.
O perish not the courtesy of shells to wive a nobler earth.

- *the last full measure of devotion*

I think the deed was richer than the dying.

They are no more by death than those
Who die beneath a trolley's wheels
Or take it in the ring for fame or money:
We will no martyrs or legends.

We can't get there by taxi-cab or sentiment.
The road is sterner than pride.
This is not a dedication to sudden understanding.

They too are craftsmen whose fingers close
Over careful triggers, whose targets we are.

Set up machine-guns over the stale belly-aching of our books

• *that we here highly resolve*

Offer no borrowed proof or energy; the dust
Does not despair of reaching will as well
As crippled goats and false delight. For faith
Is not of desolated moments, or care
Of millions faked by praise or belly-rubbing.
Chains and sickles have an equal base:
The mind behind the hand confirms belief.

Hold out for no heaven; accept no hell —
What use a perfect plan too soon, a lesser one
Too late. Invent no floods or fires.
Give solid laughing eyes to those
Who would defeat these gains by kiss, or blow.

Be generous to generations who had nothing
To take, or give. O be willing to wait no longer.
Build men, not creeds; seed not soil —
O raise the standards out of reach.

new men new world new life

• *it is the right of the people*

Do you know the name they gave the traitor?
Do you hear the echo of his laughter?

They gave him your name; your laughter
We hear. Stay fast in destiny beginning
Ends for us; quality of failure: your eyes;
Dull beard hiding what dignity we have.
Take a golden place in briefer memory:
World and roads forsaken. Turn away
This final beggar at your door. Just nothing
Needs a hopeless clown in tragic part.
Just this is breaking ties that hold no meaning.
Your bodies block our way: nature's law is vision.

• we mutually pledge to each other

I claim no tide can wrest from us
What good we are; nor country proud
Of lovers' Spring can gain parade
Of less than continents, to make us glad.

There is nothing to admire in birds
That do not fly; there is nothing to regret
In scholars trained on charms and dazed
To see us die. We come alone
Though millions nod to see us go.
We have so much to do
And lightning's slow to strike so many.

We have not long: our plays are few.
Can we convince in better speech? Yes, guns are loud
And history has place for orators not quite so proud.

- *that to secure these rights*

Know government of gaiety and mountain-love.

Behold, we quarrel gladdened though
heartsick

Knowing no home or garden knowing nothing
Can happen soon enough. Be sure we know
We miss a lot in rented-room and rented-life:
Stampede of flower-gear and stars in swollen sky.
O never think our lives are more in job

of opening way in wilderness
Than those who chase a building new to man
Or hunt a secret thing in eye of friend or thief.
We dedicate no gentle exile here. What's lost
Is gained in giving no treason to all things loved.

• *we hold these truths to be self-evident*

Let the loud men grow louder, weak weaker.
Grave brides foster motherhood: even church
Is better than long use of hate. There is
Adventure enough on earth . . . sky chattering
 on million feathered tongues
Hundreds of years from this moment. O comrades
What will they have killed? The hawk? The plunge
Of divers clean in sea? The private music
 of her voice? Shadow under leaves?
O save the station of men standing
Looking through the fresh eyes of their sons
With reason that nothing dies by will of man
Save man's capacity to *be* when words are stale . . . not done.

● *the world will little note*

At least we cannot live to see it all; no comfort
Rests in this. Yet, this record is not empty of flags;
Is left the private curve of living like the others
Whom we loved; is left our duty to the earth.

We have this history we make: it is not theirs
As money; it is not theirs as goods or change —

It is as an eternal conscience to speed the task.
It is as an admiring mother with a natural child.
It is as the homely kettle to spend its steam.
It is as the growing body of a normal tree.
It is as sympathy and love can make a place for it.

O not the drill and brazen energy of singing.
We shall reach a stand and cause for fighting.
O we should be the hunter in the hall of eternity.

- to provide new guards for future security

Corpuscles and bone more real than dream
Or love, had you anger had you faith
O had you longer time to grow, to burn,
You'd know your love no merchandise
Of calendars or family-pride:
You'd be an engine rearing at eternity.
You'd have done with syllables of fear
addressed to sons and heirs

Because we cannot wait, we cannot wait
To furnish monuments. O it is for us to live in them.

• *thus far so nobly advanced*

Give us the grace to be men
With heads and hearts above the fall of power
Come to us.

Give us the courage to take
Another's failure. Give us wisdom; give us love
To know that scarcely all can see the quiet war
That points to victory of discipline and honor.

Give us less of scorn.
O give us time to guard the winnings
From the winners. O give us words that shrug
Giant shoulders at the false display of poetry
That does not show the pilgrim far before the brave.

• *We bring no boxed solution; our flags
Stream out for use, not trumpet-masses.*

• THE MAGIC CAR

We enter the fields of New: our famished images
Crack. What is glory? what is dream? Only
Swing above the echo's currency; the Dismal Swamp
Controls not day nor coward's dark. Endure
This action: pay out those pools of self
and hear
On peaks above possession, the factory
Of time merry in the sterner making of an earth
Which is the Car we build in you and all you are.

• THE TEMPLE IN RED SQUARE

Shall hold the world, comrade, shall help the wild
Joy contain itself: not break the soft touch;
the secret

Wheeling torch of certain Spring within the landscape
Of tomorrow, gay as lovers' flesh; the gaunt driven light
of prophecy that dances on their graves;
The earth's lute, the shining heart —
I suppose this catalogue of spotted love is everything
We really need, and often holds a fairer view.

Your need is taste: not quantity of wobbling giants
Enduring dark in custom's valley, can save
And hold an architecture so vain so hurried-big.

The house of world is windowed through this hour: back.

• A LETTER TO A
DISTANT RELATIVE

Why do our names mean journeys
Over course plains where dull sounds
Stop ears deaf

To the singing Oh surely obvious singing
Voices of Tomorrow's generation, vivid,
Answering the good bird in the bough of eternity.
And looking down or up at us, as you may wonder.

Take heart (laughter and sense are guns) take hold.

• PRAYER TO GO TO PARADISE
WITH THE ASSES

Marshal the quaint barren fogbeats in harbors
left by wings of those whose mansioned lonely
powers rode a hermit's riderless hurricane
into

the dark-fretted eyes of the Golden City:
on, through fervent dreams and crystal worth
through the bellowing brainlike splendor, and
spirit's girth like dandelions growing

bestowing

April's promise under skies of dust: where
growing hard they tipped the barrel marked
God and found the little fish of memory

a crusted

monument in the fairest head of Man.

Lover: Siren: Advance: Survivor:

through pretty hoops all fast in honor

O captive dainty words denoting massive

glory

glory squashed in the hinge of a history

as dread and lovely

as bonfires burning in the breast of a dove

whose head adorns a penny-dreadful; whose

heart

beats in fascist tread of marching feet and seas

now rolling

over the grave of the fretful forgotten brave.

• AN INVITATION TO
THE DANCE

Come to the corner of Cross and Sickle
at eight sharp Put on your masks Look to
your bayonets Don't mind the barricades
Take your lives into your Hands off the morning's
tall sun straight through the question
men will ask How did you fare Tell them
our love was like a town with gods there

Our love
was like the top of time and we above to look down

And were we sad or dead or simply tired
Tell them
dynamos were toys and towers and joy joy was hired

• A LETTER TO A POLICEMAN
IN KANSAS CITY

A lot of men and armies stand to take
no chances with the prisoner goddamn
them standing there near the bars watch their fingers
flex their eyes proud their legs firm their earth this
time next year last year a hundred years from now
they think it's all ours belongs to us we've got
you where we want for nothing

any painter
can't paint any carpenter can't build any
doctor can't cure any man can't say how deep
it goes inside to watch to stand dumb
in the streets of their cities and know
that your head's crummy your feet drip blood
that your belly rots your life is shot

your days
are spent in two-bit flops because of them
because they get away with murder away
with everything we are or ever were come
to think of it

Goddamn them standing on
the cover of our world their heavy boots grinding
into our faces their ropes about our necks their guns
shut your mouth you bastard where do you live
what are you doing here look out
look out we don't know anything about that but
I'll tell you where we live and what we're doing here
tomorrow maybe I'll tell you then I'll tell you

when your guard is down when the thing breaks
I'll tell you all you want to know come to
think of it

I'm not too starved to want food
not too homeless to want a home not too dumb
to answer questions come to think of it
it'll take a hell
of a lot more than you've got to stop what's
going on deep inside us when it starts out
when it starts wheels going worlds growing
and any man can live on earth when we're through with it.

• THERE'S A TRAIN
LEAVING SOON

I want no easy light to lift my eyes.
Conversation in cells is rich as words
Arranged to pin imagination, spinning
loose as death's more lenient glove.

Call to me at end of operation: when love
Sewn into the breastwork of this sky,
When lanced of greed and hate and fear,
When lost of anger, envy's vivid eye
Gone blind and black, when all is clear –
Your way to me – call: and I shall try to answer back.

The guilt of man does not defer the sun.
The sky sends out no SOS, the rivers
Reconcile the valley-seed to villages
Removed from priestly murders in our streets
Flowers ask no mercy, needing none,
 though stained by blood of pickets.
The lynch-tree sends out its shoots
Above the stripped slain body of the Negro.
And the stars witness only the horror of space.

Like perspective give to us: perform
No wailing over wooden days, that
 take an acid, either way.
This is a winter time too recent cold
For the burst of spring in our veins,
In our view.
There is nothing to decide: or kill.
Guard against the treachery of heart
It is the head that signs your will.

• *The earth's lute, the shining heart*

• LET US HAVE MADNESS

We wanted more; we looked to find
An open door, an utter deed of love,
Transforming day's evil darkness;
but

We found extended hell and fog
Upon the earth, and within the head
A rotting bog of lean huge graves.

• WE LEAVE YOU PLEASURE

We leave you pleasure in the earth:
Burnt grass in the sun; waters'
Body, lovely in the waste of years,
Having no wings for us;
The stellar vast wonder in the sky;
 the furniture
Of Space shattered within the heart;
The cynical image of smoke
 curling up
From homes we never had.

We leave you seas upon parched shores;
The iron twist in vines
Over our graves: the deafening sound
Of silence over everything.
Turn from the rebel body: here;
The crude question of the grass;
The spirit's face bleary
With sightlessness. It is enough.
We leave you.

• A LETTER TO THE CITIZENS
OF TOMORROW

Do you wonder, watching earth
Contribute a fabulous profusion of life ↗
To the meanest of men and things
In your world of huge unending delight,
How we came to tarry in the dusk so long?
Why we spent our time and lives in waiting?

Then this is why and how the end and start:
Of what we were, you are.

For
The end and start of the journey is the distance between the hills.

Is the size of man the shape of his going
On till voices in the stricken valleys
Can never near his day: can never send warning:

Begin
Begin can never can never say Of what we were: you are.

• HISTORY IS A THRONE AND A GATE
(an exercise in statement)

I walked to the edge of you, looked over

calmly serenely

it is not usual that music should have this body

it is not well that shadow should singe the sun

it is not time to tell you of what I saw has done

and often now, it seems

and this moment's muscles divide me down

to the road called forever and sceneless days are wound

• D E M O N S T R A T I O N

I thought your face as lovely
As mind knows silence in mansions
Read about, so slowly real and long ago:

Here words are pigeon-toed schoolboys
lispings
Through the halls of sunny love on earth
For at the moment, and sudden,
While kissing you,
The sound of a crowd in the street
Gave the kisses double homes
And the press of your lips was a toast
To the torch which they carried,
Was a flame tossing above the shoulders
Of an unloosed wonder where are no words,
 like hairy dreams, to squat
Above the wild sweet grave of our honor.

• THE OTHER SIDE:
THE GREEN HOME

The earth is near tonight; O slow
within that wonder, turning
mouth to mine, the million laws of world
forgotten, love: this is the solid level goal
of all we seek forever, the gate ajar . . .
the timbers of the self give way

slow: our posture

stays the strain a moment
more, explodes in flashing panic
then, fails
the rebel wounds of wanting O peace
in spite of death our empty star assumes
its place in sky.
We shall ascend again within that wonder, love.

• A LETTER TO THOSE
WHO ARE ABOUT TO DIE

You were the last to love America; too grim
Are the hours of waiting, too new are the names
On the map of this geography: for more
Than all the truth which drums and flags deny,
For more than all that we can tell or feel or do
Is told, is felt, is done, in this: about to die.

You were the first to love America; as men
Love the mother who leaves them, as kinsmen
Falling in feuds respect the draw of a blood
That has made of wilderness a reasonable earth.
You were the victims of a synthetic tradition
Of love, you who should have hated their healing from birth.

You can be the first and last forever to love
This country: you whose lives are empty of living;
Whose bodies already are bargained for and bleeding . . .
vow
To alter nothing of living but life in our time,
To plant the dynamite of hate in all our love and seeding
O to build and break and march and climb and climb.

• THE LADDER

Whether my day is day for you
or light on other plane in other eyes,
is not renunciatory measure of speech.
Men on little shelves of occupation
must find another shelf, another day,
when houses are put in order; you will not
get near the pigeonholes of what they've been.
Coming then to place of bodies: not cities,
not plans, or greater age, new culture,
can alter the system of being a man.
Stay near to that. We've had enough
of games; enough of pressing selves
along the grooves of epic dishonesty.

Revolution is not career as making
coffee is career. It is the ladder;
the mountain is man.
Save the mountain.
Ladders are useful in their use.

• THE RED WOMAN

Man has loved an image whose core
is hard
And bright as rifle's fire: across outposts
Of memory, post-war decay and fact
of coming war — hysteria's hand
Over the eyes of young men — we see
Huge feminine anger
Born in forests of our love.
Here the clean center in Time's determination,
Where fall these million skulls
In breaking ground of vast lovely flags
And history is stamped
with the woman-image, tall as
Thank You's from a beggar's lips
And as meaningfully walking
Down all the saddening corridor of mind.
There is the fire of love for a man to love.
Comrades, tomorrow is too late.
Watch the massive body stir
Horizon's nearness, coming on
In the Kremlin lamps of her eyes,
In the iron advance of arms
Like crowds of working men
Exploring bellies of the rich
with thunder of planning
And the lightning beauty of Revolution;
Grinding out of day's agony
A vast and teeming star.
Comrades, the Red Woman!

She is dream's image made real.
She is the timeless bride of all our loving.
I give you dawn on the face of death.

On the huge prone wonder of the earth.

• A LITTLE ODE

This ruin is faithful to plan though not to us.
Does it hold out, hold up? replace the banner?
O dying waste and throat of water
The surgeons and the singers clamor
Burnt by weakness, killed in wars unfought.
Be conscious of the merit of these killers
 trapped
In ghastly tombs that they themselves have bought.
Be clever and constant, let fools
Forever drive their bargain under grass.
We have no damaged holdings; our tools
Are new to build a workers' working class.

• Over our faces the hushed applause,
the wall of words that nearly killed

• LETTER TO THE OLD MEN

What have you left for us to say to you?
What have you done that we can praise?

You stand on the ice of our hatred; your faces
Are turned to the wall. *You have not long.*
It is quite late for anger: we have not time
To forgive you. Where can you turn?
Our searchlights rake the streets of sight.

O vision

Is in having power like the morning star,
Like weather in new world of stellar joy;
Is in having the power to be what you are
On earth where all is change with reason.

O elaborately

Sightless old men in cathedrals of decay:
Death is the bitter goat in your gardens
the traveler come
Like a wonderful lion in dream of redemption
To take you away. What have you left for us?
Our frontiers are all guarded; the day's work's
begun.

The heroes flee your prisons; the sick approach
the sun.

Our welcome is for others: your graves are ready,
waiting . . . and pity
Can feed on the stone. For time and love
Are our ancestors, these, and these alone.

• LOYALTY IS THE LIFE YOU ARE

I shall be with you when hollow faces
on Time's screen stare at you leaning forward
leaving no distance from here to Berlin or Rome
leaving no roses under the wheels of the traitors
or hate's tractors tearing up earth Goodbye to golden
technique of grain till attack the landscape background
of fists police bombs till staged a comeback being
our eyes are the eyes at your windows gentlemen
our hands are the hands at the latches of your doors
stopped horsing around with fascist whores I tell
you I shall be with you stopped toying with them
with the mind spirit god or what have you
or I to gain and I think the strain is good gentlemen
for us the pity we felt with the goat to be shot
in the drinking place of our sorrow
 our frightful
white lives laid bare to the clever photography
which armies employ with men cheap gas masks cost money.

• NIGHT HAS BEEN AS
BEAUTIFUL AS VIRGINIA

This ends: entering the show of silence:
voices gone: the outposts of glory given
bare to stillness. Traps are sprung on day;
corpse sprawls free, is spared a second's
grace — blunted by dark the trees
draw back, like ghostly badgers given
homes whose profile needs a brighter earth,
then, as we watch,
like collapsible drinking-cups, they lunge
at space, in full gulp getting the first star.

Through hours, intent on fields within ourselves;
exploring maps that lead from womb
to will of being here where every flower closed,
where every use of light goes late to memory
and goal awaits tomorrow's massive towns

we hear the dark curve of eternity go coughing down the hills
no bird could stay this dangerous bough, no singing
equal this

Our shield shall bear divorce of time and bring
Oh bring, as we watch in this dark
 like dawn
Oh bring proclaim the pity shock this hunger's timeless game.

• THE FIRING

O seal the shining! this stillness binds the stars
In ageless shell of space. Permit no caricature
Of puny hare betrayed by moon; no sober
Music's beeless hive;

give

Blow for blow and back to fellow-back
The driving shine of quiet mind —
In end, the starry scream is uniform disaster.
This weasel-rage of generated murder
Is wilder stand for peaceful verse;
The utter bird our skies cannot withstand.

I watch this paper-record's woven sound:
The pageantry of rustless guns the planted horror —
I hate

This boy's siege on witless Troy: this Helen's epic soulless noise.

- THIS MAN WAS YOUR BROTHER
(footnote for newsreel)

How white how calm the hours are
I still have time
the body of living beats in my hand
schemeless
like a garden of voices in the sky
what
crucified mounts a creatured stair
soldiers gentlemen soldiers'
boots have made it crimson there
soldiers flay the earth with music woman
shriek I said and cry I said and say his name
is not the rush of flesh to hold
when soldiers place
the long far distance over the flight and song of him
ponderous eyes move in the silent face
his mouth is strained with stretching crazy roots
we like the sound I said the sight I said of boots of boots
I said I still have time

• MY GENERATION READING
THE NEWSPAPERS

We must be slow and delicate; return
the policeman's stare with some esteem,
remember this is not a shadow play
of doves and geese but this is now
the time to write it down, record the words —
I mean we should have left some pride
of youth and not forget the destiny of men
who say goodbye to the wives and homes
they've read about at breakfast in a restaurant:
“My love.” — without regret or bitterness
obtain the measure of the stride we make,
the latest song has chosen a theme of love
delivering us from all evil — destroy . . .?
why no . . . this too is fanciful . . . funny how
hard it is to be slow and delicate in this,
this thing of framing words to mark this grave
I mean nothing short of blood in every street
on earth can fitly voice the loss of these.

• A LETTER ON THE USE OF
MACHINEGUNS AT WEDDINGS

Like the soldier, like the sailor, like the bib and tuck and bailer,
like the corner where we loiter, like the congressman and lawyer,
like the cop on the hill, like the lead in weary Will,
like the kittens in the water, like the names on Hearst's blotter,
like the guys and dames who laugh and chatter,
like the boys and girls who don't matter,
like the preacher and the Pope, like the punks who dish the dope,
like the hungry singing Home on the Range,
like Father Coughlin acting like Red Grange,
like the grumble of the tuba, like the sugar war in Cuba,
like the bill-collectors, like the Law-respecters,
like the pimps and prostitutes, like Mickey Mouse and Puss-in-Boots,
like the churches and the jails, like Astor's hounds and quails,
she's like you like her, now don't you try to spike her,
she's the nuts, she's a mile of Camel butts,
she's a honey in the money, she's my pearl,
what am I offered for being alive and willing to marry the girl?
though her insides rumble and her joints are out of whack,
let's give her a whirl, why grumble or try to draw back?
though her hair is false and her teeth are yellow,
let's get chummy, let's all get a break. For what's a fellow
got at stake, for what's a guy to do
who hasn't the guts to deal with sluts, guys like me and you.

• and something stabs into the sun before our opened eyes

• ALL THE DAY

Because we have no type of earth for everyone;
Because we hold against all sign of pride
In men whose wakened love endures not long,
 not well; because our joy is mixed
Of valley-peace of mountainous pain, we bar
No singing shiver in slighter use of all we know.

Our likeness designs no further war,
No element of disaster; and yet the orbit
Of all things begins in us. We walk
In self, confined in pressure's share
In crumbling world — the pleasure gone,
The rooms reserved for “bird” and “flame”
Untenanted; the heart now counts the piggish hair
 on childhood's “loveliness.”
Our world is hollow under guise of heaviness.
We leave the homely grief; are left
An agony that builds to save itself.

While the birds make music

All else is shallow storm: the shadow strength,
The pigmy strapped in harness of despair —
Because your shape is shaped *without*
This peopled solitude must build in self one everywhere.

• NOCTURNE FOR THE HEIRS OF LIGHT

Acknowledge last this human peace:
summer patient holds precisely duplicates of chords and tides
that overcast by time, relax their magic late or soon
to those whose noonfilled faces blend
the autumn's coming blight, the willful waxen spring —
the faltering heart is held by creature ease in orbit frames of earth.

so like the sagging flood of light the dazzling shine of fire
on these hills whose phantom helpless flowers blossom
in the fuselage of this Tennessee flow of death and dark
constricted

like pale fruitless orchards on the roaring slope of despair

or like our own chase ribbed by death's atomic street
by waves of doubt issuing the wound's riding power
the final road the plight of eyes grown hard

Believe me if all those endearing young charms
girls and gasmasks

But we go back. We know the nature of the lie.

We know no feckless later leaf shall rivet sky

O faltering heart the magic hill shall shine in human
face the awful valley send a child!

belief in Winter's iron music turns the lands of home to Spring.

• A LETTER ON LIBERTY

How hasten? hearten? O morning star and
morning paper hold and help O evening
star and rival party number numb
and spell our names our like our lucklessness
nor dawn nor dim shall solve shall slaughter
us O heart the agent and the anger hold
and help they wheel the sullen guns into our
rooms

and rots this sunny wilderness now love
now lease these fallen flung to number
numb and touch not teach that dawn
is share of dark the scrawl of grief
the scowl of grass and did and do the final fort
of dirty weather hastens heartens O bright
bastards bitches babies our like into our
rooms

our lucklessness observed obscured
These rack the silken guts within the tombs
of men who needed more than exercise and excrement of words

• A LETTER TO THE LIBERALS

It's not enough
That doom shall find us whole of hate
And terror; valid ruin admires devotion
Growing out of wonder that it lived
At all. Can we admire and will the sport of clowns
Performing in their tents, enclosed

from us

By shock of finding now that we
Have other things to do? For after all
The truth is out, the hour breaks, the bridges
Fall, the dams give way; our time's
At hand. We know the voices, the clumsy faces:
“Almighty ghost, have us. Almighty God, save us.”

We bring no boxed solution; our flags
Stream out for use, not trumpet-masses.

I'm tired of all they say: “How do you say ‘worker’?
Make it ring?” Near the run-down factory
The hills still climb to cloud and silence,
Birds singing, their notes no whorish alphabet
Or key to foreign trade; the horizon,
Indolent and shifting as men or tides,
Has scars and wonderment unchanged by general strikes.

Submit no more. They said the wind would polish names
And thunder clear the quiet streets: I saw them smile
I knew they lied
Spies aware of danger grasp for guns
Not straws: be noble and be true
Your whiter cloaks provide a better sight on you.

• WE MUST BE SLOW

For you and I are bathed in silence:
Here where the country all about
Is quiet; asleep in the softness
Of this evening star, sparkling
On the wrist of night. The village lights,
Like ancient bards at prayer, come
Gently to us over fields of growing corn
And docile sheep. We'd like belonging
Here, where sleep is not of city-kind,
Where sleep is full and light and close
As outline of a leaf in glass of tea; but
Knowledge in the heart of each of us
Has painted rotten eyes within
The head: we have no choice: we see
All weeping things and gaudy days
Upon this humble earth, blending
Taxis' horns and giant despair
With every landscape, here, or anywhere.

• DOSTOYEVSKY

Your features with — before the accidental coil
Of days had brought Siberia; before your need
To find a passage out had brought you
Torture in the famine of a traitor's love.

How seared the wasteland of your sight:
How well you knew the horror
In the beggar's eye; the eyes that leaned
Against the fabric of your exile
And drew you back to drown with them
In troubled lands where masks have shown
A tattered front and fungusteeth
Are seen at work on pleading thick faces.

And when ambition had brought
The hollow stint of words to light
What arms what words were kind to you?

Retreat was yours, I think, in going
Fully out . . . deep into the universe of self:
Where faithless women prepare no hurt
or healing, but lift
Their arms in shadowed bitterness to hold
At last the shells of I and I am this
You leave to them; where hungry men move through
The huge and tender brain to file themselves
away
In harsher ledgers of despair.

• NOTE FOR A DIARY

I

I want no wonder's cloud or church to wake me.

O let us come

We are so long away: the apple orchards on the slope

Of vivid hill; the glint of wind in sunny trees

Along the lake, its waters cold and bodies clean

Their shape in break of it —

diving. Girls whose simple naked laughing
Give to clothes and green paths gaining country roads;
Your great hand! I listen now the turn the lastly earth.
But ever that sky should fall from delicate heights

And the lean slicing wings should fill all sleep of creatures here
It is this time we wish no wonder; knowing ends

Are break of growth and breath; knowing no circumstance
Of danger can stay the daring of the circling bird: the summer
Heart of time within this place. The gloss-trees of corn,
That crawl across the windows of this cottage, are story
Growing into us: the soil and seed of fate is now
The engine WE nor any love or hour's shadow glory gain
Shall learn from "one" the lesson's voice and Day, O let us come.

II

And at the closing awful calm

When voices give muffled praise whose meaning

Cannot matter to the rest: "How has the anger worn?

How deep how pure these wells?" Out of

the careless crumbled West of nation

And of man, the heart will climb a little way

In slogans, sand and ease — O hollow
The weakling's heaven the birthright of the fool
Whose folly is the common botch the pitch of human's speech:
O let us come

include

This argument this hour's blade and creed its closing awful calm.

• *How white, how calm the hours are*

• ODE TO THE NEW MEN

Do watch! do wait! the season nears its grain;
 in heart the lusty rain
Of newness spends its yield in wonderment.
Day's joy! day's jewel! we wait content
Where dreams already crowd the corn in field.

Over our faces the hushed applause, the wall
 of words that nearly killed —
Oh self so lately found in stranger's hall
Is slight, indeed, to touch all Time has willed:
This stir of starlight in this ancient ground.

Prepare no minor welcome for their deed;
 it is a massive home they need
Who are the front of earth, its rider ridden
Down that Autumn's shore where hope has hidden
Timbers for a better home, the final worth!

At the head of shock, men, no shield of healing,
 no mastership but feeling —
And slow! nor fail in health your faster sun;
Your millions moving wires as happy one.
This is the sale of old, the wealth of new. Now . . . go!

• FIELDS OF EARTH

The press reports the enemy in power: the solo
Flyers comb the countryside for volunteers
Demanding first in deeds. Not words or dying themes
Of flag or wooden guns can save us now.
We lose no ground by right of number;
Who are the area of time, a legion whose skill
Is best put forth by order of a public bond
In blood we've lost on every field of earth and sea.

• A LETTER TO THE INVENTORS
OF A TRADITION

How do you know what effigy of self
This radiance has willed? Headlights hold
Not wheels to rail nor find the aerial sight
Of South-living cities too cruel for bulbs
Whose duty rests in human eye within the cabs
Of cattle-trains; there is a mixed resemblance
To fields of war in this: man the maker, unmade . . .
Like the name I called, O like the answer
never come.

I can not think the earth is greater now
That dwarfs have set it high: each tree
A throne, each river roof to greater past.
Of all the blown wild pines of yesterday's
Power; in all the humble soft skies kneeling
on the motherbreast of the Mississippi
There is no leisure, no earnest loss nor rest
Save in the name I called, save in the answer
never come.

• THE MECHANICAL HEART

I have no answer, time or will, to answer those
Who fear defeat of mind in casting heart aside.
I hold as guest no literature of feeling:
Strain, story, swerve of faulty hands,
No final stab of hunger. I heed
In fuller part that thing we are when quiet,
Unconfused by motion, unconfessed of comrade-love,
When quick to call the millions monkeys whose eyes
Reflect the sanity of a Santa Claus stuck
 in a chimney much too big for him —
When cool to easy trick and cosy task
Of sorting out the middle class, the muddled case,
The Word in flesh, the crawling wart and Fathers' curse.
 I have no answer, time or will
To question what truth I know. We need
So little proof: no house is ever started at the roof.

• ARK: ANGELUS: ANVIL

We do not bargain for delight; vitality
Of book and bugle has nerve enough outside
The crying holy stars of self: despoiled
Of growing round a sounder base, we launch
Despair — its steeples churches chiming

Lizard-joy O justification of jurors
Condemned by thieves. The unaccounting criminal
Flower world and town
Father work and time

are

April's thumb points well to sound of snapping strings
And glaring ghosts are straight in heart the fury found.

We do not affirm delight: would you
Have the signature of sun itself to stay the dawn?
This enterprise is earnest balloonful flowering
Of brain and all the wonder blowing good like grain.

• THE STRANGER

He needs the antiseptic of the sunlight: neither
Mine's damp nor mill's noise can still for him
The eyeless straps and belts of natural energy:
The lamps and whistles of the void, the coreless
Energy of vast and loyal seas — for him
The union's foreman and the scab are one
In filthless destiny. The witness does the crime,
The noble deed — for him, the knitted heart,
 the sexless bee,
Are real, are pulse of chance, are pain of rot.

How can he take a mind not his? how can he
Flood a world whose wonder is the desert of himself?

Hand across your hand: he is the ray of dark
To bright the camps whose men are bluster's riding light.
He is the shallow seeking depth an obsolete like poet's lark.

• GRADUATION

More than whistles' blast that ends for us
All work in others' industry and world:
More than sight of transportation stopped;
Their ships and trolleys left to take
The holiday of Strike, our absolute estate,
our lesser task;
More than dancing in the palaces of king
And "patriot"; more than joy
As prisons pour our own intact
To us; more than fellowship; more than victories'
Fire and vivid economic gain: O more than this?
There could not be. For now.

The singing starts: our program's
Under way. And though
We've nothing done and everything to do,
We've learned that consummation waits
And will not rot. O let your Love consume your thought.

• HAVING BEEN NEAR

My quality is such as common things
Decide: the lack or amplitude of air;
Ribs' placement; heart's strength; belly's
Load — how can I create a goal
Beyond confessional speech in this?

The way of special sight? acquiescence
To wild brakes upon the doleful belly-gas:
Having charity like lizard's tongue
Within the head's starblanched crying?

Or should I stretch a single wire
Quite through the spirit's snobbery,
Hanging from it, in qualified display,
The graphs of love's scant honor: lungs,
Star-hunger, bird's cry, flowers,
The "moving", "drawing near", "coming
On"; enormous wings in steaming hash
Of sun, night, rivers,
And the loveful "having been."

• COUNTRY EXCURSION

Now this remains: the thunder stopped;
the stubborn sky grown thick,
all clumsy, holding back
and we
in silence, running, as though
on padded drums; hitting nothing,
no sound and something singing
close and hard and all around
us, like
sudden angles loosed in wind-murdered hair.
Not laughing now, against some reason
running, not followed
and earth
this field is dry and water needs
while drools a frivolous sky: this nasty
waiting being everything in one, a civil
war in perfect check
and then
the rain!

It all remains: endured the shelter, and through
the limbs and leaves of chosen tree
we heard that coaxing, that definite clean.

• our eyes are the eyes at your windows gentlemen
our hands are the hands at the latches of your doors

• L E A F L E T (O N E)

The speaking mouth's a hearse of wasted days
and in the swamps they track him down they cut
him up they make a mess of him and in the streets
we run for cover · they're opening fire they're opening
mouths to laugh and laughter has a bell to ring
an even politician-sleep from the I-said-a-dirty-word
ritual of living · even now they're ganging up on us
run like hell run into the speaking mouth · you crazy
bitch keep your cards down out of sight

but what of those who cannot speak? who fail to laugh?
ladies' lovely garments are the clouds and music
blew her nose · the snot was eaten by the poor my god
to thee to this · someone
tell that woman not to show her cards tell her to come
up to the Hotel Nacional · come out to see the bull
get his in all the world golgotha (the crazy
woman with the pampered paunch do you know the one?)
I scarcely know the name of one they shot
without this rage · without I know they shoot to get
us all to kill the gentle silent men because
they ask to live · they ask alone to live.

Tell her to come out and hear the band play Dixie
at the hour of our death while the fleet waits
in the harbor · color of horror: confetti acts
as wine in Cuban waters and the bright little Christs
flit through the crowds into the church bearing
tidings of great joy to the fat woman
in penthouse-paradise · while we wait speak? laugh?

They raise

their glasses, rifles, grenades, their jeweled hands and take another card another life another Omaha another sack in another river another knife in another back · my dear · these dreadful strikes and we fear no hear no see no evil being dead being alive in death.

There must be time · turn your eyes away shall we see the murdered peace the cheated hope the fire flickered out the Negro dead (the sun is kind and wise) your friend shot through the mouth the flame stilled the gang storming the jail while the wounded stir the dust with maimed hands · while we wait · the sun is kind to us in motorcar and diningroom · do not lose heart O the day is good to us the poets in the papers say amen unto you a child is butchered but Gloria's got a million

loving her tonight for every baby born in Cuba, its father long in jail · sleep, baby, sleep your mother sold herself to England · baby, sleep they raped her with a battleship · my baby sleep · what time is it? We watch the well-dressed man leaning propped against the doorway

dead · we took his watch his purse; we stabbed him with a borrowed knife · once upon a time upon a time · sunlight destroys the shadow where we stand · What fraud is this? what place is this? his eyes stir · there was there was · We're on the spot jeweled hand: another card please.

The prisoners see planes over Havana, slim as girls
against the night and stars · from their cells
they hear the chatter of machineguns · rumble
of heavy trucks along the street. They do not ask
for cigarettes: they speak the guard: what time
is it? Even the doomed can wait a little longer · even
the condemned can lift their arms a final hanging car
geared to ride the world on the wires of our bodies.
We stumble against the hand reaching for another card
we are gray, color of decayed dreams and starved children.
What is the price of sugar? we view the work
of high-powered rifles on the screen · "Machado
has withdrawn." We flee the theatre knowing
they'll get us · they'll get us everyone

When

will you give an answer? shall we go down like rabbits
in an iron wood with the dead dripping their rotten sleep
into our throats? silver tassels on the casket · gold
filling from the teeth of thieves dug glistening
from their graves and the word was the wind honest
to God it was Suddenly we knew nothing of words
could save us · we knew the man across the street would
come for us we knew whose hand supplied the card
bidding a final trump once upon a time once
when I am through with orators when we are through when we
begin there must be time there must be Now.

• L E A F L E T (T W O)

"The powers of the blood, unbroken bodily forces, resume their ancient lordship. The air-man, type of the modern warrior of the Faustian world, stalks with cynical laughter over the ruins of the Reichstag. Out of the night of history, old shadows are appearing . . . The figure of the Leader — comes out into the stark day . . . the grim serenity of Mussolini, the harsh force of Hitler. And behind them stride the eternal *condottieri* — the gallant, vivid Balbo, the ruthless Goering."

W. E. D. ALLEN
Former Member British Parliament

High over the graves of our comrades, banked
sharp on the barn-waste of sky, where groans
of prisoners and sobbing of women, cannot

be heard,

the easy drive of humble pistons bears
the Warrior Hero home:

honor to him. Honor and heaps
of bloody earth to those whose deaths he did.
Bitter clear the waters echo voices closed
in them; barren-green the meadowgrass —
black and muddy trenches goad
the beautiful, raped bodies of boys —

*Oh land alive with hypocrites and harlots:
hang wreaths upon the butchered West.*

And the orator blew into his hands, pulling
a pamphlet "Pledge of Peace" from out his pocket,
he neatly shot a thousand pacifists and two nations.

While, overhead
the bombing plane made music all that day
bringing Hitler back from Italy
for Mussolini had a bug about the British fleet
as thick as motor-oil all up and down

the Mediterranean Sea.

"I shall respect your wishes, sir," he said,
"My hands are clean of Austria." But
"the powers of the blood" got little Dollfuss
and the "unbroken bodily forces" wiped
out another brood of ugly ducks:

(O grim serenity the gallant vivid pop!)

Schleicher and Röhm, Karl Ernst

and Heines this great hand stark as eternity

O gain: the shadows opening

like skulls like flowers

opening hand!

Down, down, the plane
clears trees, buildings; fondles earth in massive style
to release a ridiculous mustache,
the man, scrambling

after, into the Kroll Opera House —

the Warrior Bold now greets the perfect smile

“over the ruin of the Reichstag”:

ranks of troops, the battalions of police, and

his friends. "My friends, I wish to explain . . ."

like skulls like flowers

opening hand

and all the time and all the time

for all time

We know our enemies.

• POEM IN THE FORM OF A LETTER:
TO LAURO DE BOSIS

Fire and wings, de Bosis, soaring above
Rome and Mussolini into the night
in a clear flame over the cities
and the waters; into the hands
of those who walk with heads high
down lanes of men through the jeers
and bayonets. Head, quick and laurelscarred
from the trodden dust into the ages
while motors drone in prayer our father
which art Mussolini fascist airmen take off
in pursuit chanting
hail and hallowed be thy name from loss
of sleep the blood warm
drenching an appleblossom-sleep
through the skull
the spiders of death
welling into the throat machine guns
exultantly thy kingdom come
over the poet's head bent in a moment.
Hand releasing the stick, releasing the fall
and the flight releasing thy will be done
with zoom upward not to go down
and the blank thud for an instant through sleep
being all over on earth as it is in Italy.
See, high in the empty air power and glory forever
iron fist plunging into the throat
words bubbling through the fingers
power and raving vision glory
in the cockpit with hunger of the moth

for the star slaughtered cities wrapping
themselves in acid of the words tongue
in the mangled cheek falling falling
sweeping away all barriers from the earth
burning flesh and flower's bloom blood
liberated from the useless bone-plates
tunneling down
message to the corn and grapes
crippled wings
telling the story of the salesman and the farmer's
daughter to the torch hovering near
the wreckage

asking

who is to pick me up who is this one
to lift me up for the love of God what
did happen and lift me from the broken wheels
and torn silk teeth jutting redly in the fire
ankles of the countryside boasting pus
and old scabs
and nobody telling me
give us our daily bread telling me amen.

Huge serene head in the dust reading the book
of an American poet
who wrote of the old old beauty fleeing Minos
on to the sun and Athens lost falling
into the sea Icarian unattainable with wax
and gasoline onward in flight leaving nothing
Ariadne fifteen hundred years before Christ
Erigone and Phaedra
hear O my fathers

thunderous feet marching through my dust
in Grecian tunics lion skins and field tanks
submarines through the barbed wire lily strewn
skulls floating grinning eye sockets draining
gas and tainted beef Diktyenna-britomart
and the dancers in the chorus trailing necklaces
through the guts on the granite altars
splashing the faces of the poor in Marseilles
and in Trenton New Jersey swords spears
big berthas and the rain and the drought
beggars strolling into the museum lobby
trying to peer into the gloom inside
where are the dead and the instruments of death.
O mother of God when you have seen the ruin
of wings put out over all you are and hope to be
when they lower vision into your eye's void
of seeing can you go back to celebrate
the strength of knowing faith and charity
beloved . . . God, the dark of wonder in the alley
sunset roses or perhaps the swastika
tattooed on the belly of president McKinley

doing

a two forward one back pause and around
and about and a one and a two and a swing
from the tree

hands clawing for breath you bastard
you nigger having a little party
up to the house tomorrow night
only the best people
on to the sun Apollo and the wheat exchange
looking up from the book serenely smiling

in Italy hand reaching forth
an American hand to the head
in the dust smiling smiling.

This then is the story of my death
listen O my countrymen
the seasons moving on in a cycle
of night and of death
are surely moving in the pulse of the earth
a better race of men are surely moving
and the risings up and comings forth
are to be pure and new on the streams
and the hills of the earth
we should love but cannot love being as we are
heads serene in the dust
since that which is ours does not belong to us
evil hand releasing
Shelley and de Bosis and the night coming on
with the curve of the earth we are not lost
who have never known a path
we are not wise who are flabby with our wisdom
hovering near the wreckage
we are not brave to lean our elbows smugly
on the strength of a few words not telling us
what did happen to the farmer's daughter
being lost unwise and cowards my country
with the seasons moving the weeds
above our graves
forgive us our misgivings as we forgive those
who mislead us
for all is not well

and lead us not blindly into a new death
but deliver us from all O my countrymen
this then is the story of my death.

When we stand narrow in the maw of eternity
our bodies at rest pretending nothing
 the long reach of root and grass denied of nothing
when the cities and the waters move on
without us savage in the heads of other men
then it will be time to think no more of speaking
to the King or to the people but now our cause
 a mystery like the vision of good stars
 supported by the head in wonder-skies
is thrilling through the heart and power
of the stars of the vision's blood is yours
to use.

The fences of the ocean's shore
the chill hands of the dynamo
every power known to function in this time
what are they as power O Comrades
compared to the driving wheels of our purpose
compared to the iron worlds of strength
our every step is loosing on the restive earth.
Power is in hate
who is this one to lift me up being all over the earth

Power is in living clean before our love
has written what we are
on every distant corner of Tomorrow's sky.

• A LETTER TO THE
YOUNG MEN

When the days grow teeth at last and games
Are over; when sunset stills our eyes and search
Is done, the ways all blocked, the wind's
Majestic house gone slack to the crush
Of quarreling planes in all their blue skies;
When bayonets are dearer than sunflowers
In all the stalls of earth; when your country
Needs you asking Why do naked good bodies
Go up like stale rockets O proud bloody flowers
Growing in History's garden Break it
Up young men their guns are pointed
At you are pointed at all the mad flaming
Grandeur which killers can never make die.

• *we hear the dark curve of eternity go coughing down the hills*

Say something, man, say something before the nations and the people;
tell them your story tell them the earth is a bitch gone crazy.

Explain the joke the shadow-days explain the troops and guns
get down on your knees young men What happened
to your girl? remember that night in the hills? the moon the stars
her face her lips bloodily What did you promise? what did you do?

gentlemen I offer 2 dollars I offer bread and a blue
dress with puffed sleeves *Once the weight and fate of Europe*
bung her eyes were bright and dreamful larger than life

when they
cut her down (stop it kill him swing it sister swing it over
the limb of a tall tree where they can't get honeysuckle goodnight
God will guide you a gull will take you home) when they took
the automatic out of her hand when they met her on the street

offering 2 dollars

Sin can never taint you now with the rocketflare the scream white
and holy eyeballs crimson shot with fire O mongrel froth of cities
being blasted to bits O vulgar little men operating beautiful in-
struments

bringing the blue restless sky down into their eyes not
seeing not knowing not caring O my god my god where did they
go better to die better to feel that all wisdom science and mastery
have been turned against you that they notice you and kill you (with
the newspaper here on the desk beside me

tell them Joe tell them Ed tell them I read about
pale-green bells in a beautiful book having the face
of a happy man on its cover) better to die while heavy guns shake

the earth and it's all big and clear save us from the peace
between
wars Fool fool every man's at war who's hungry and hunted
whether
in Omaha or Tokyo here they come. Here they come Look out
they mean business they mean an end to standing in rain waiting
for freights out of Toledo and Detroit Did we ever make
a town? a porterhouse? we were always just this side of getting
anything
or anywhere

Down on our luck down on your knees O villages of
terror and the soft slow ping of a 32 and the sure happy grind of
teeth in the head of a picket shot down in San Francisco. Chinese
children have little faces and the sky over China is blue as gunsmoke
as lovely as memory of good food beardless boys

in the Nineteenth Route Army love flowers and taffy
they wonder at the joke but they do not laugh multitudes harvest
rice and the bombing planes sound like bees *O thou that dwell'st
in the heavens high Above you stars and within you sky* mad after
spotless lilies 5:5:3: 1.75: 1.75: British American Japanese

French Italian battleships cruisers submarines torpedo-
boats *There were ninety and nine* listening to the man on the radio
Soviet Soviet

the retail price on cotton wheat and corn was

Down on your knees
shells grenades bunting legs bayonets arms

more than 2 dollars offers a chance

We present gas
Hitler offers
Soviet Soviet

steel helmets parade before the cells they twist his arms his testicles
Do you believe? Do you believe?

This is

the strain the eternal strain the Lord of all things loves Billy bully
Billy Hearst barbed wire a crown of homos sharpshooters
“though

I cannot be a soldier, I can encourage them by dying” Shanghai’s
Big Sword Corps proves the cheering 1929 October 24 in every
pot a chicken a pot in every belly Morgan Hoover Mussolini come
to bury them not to Down on your knees Palazzo Venezia watch
the stairs I’m coming up Watch that guy in the grey suit thou
dearest Augustine all is gone gone gone. What did they say when
you told them *Where bright angel feet have trod* They said O.

We don’t want much we want everything and the sun
withers the grass in the parks From our benches we can
see the stone faces of well-fed politicians we can hear
the doors close in Packards we can smell the perfume
of fat bitches with poodles we can leave our benches we cannot
leave what they have done to us we can stand up Christ we can
stand up in their highest building and we won’t have room for all
the standing up we need we’ve been under We’ve been nothing
We’ve been around too long they can’t take us in They haven’t got
a jail stout enough to hold us

they haven’t

got a leg to stand on Fool fool just across the street
over those windows see their hard faces curl of cigarette
smoke above the machineguns we’re in the line of fire
they knock down good dough keeping us in line keep-
ing us off Are they afraid are they sleeping less?

You’re damn tootin’ but he said we don’t
want much We want everything. A hundred million of us
coming

up those stairs in Spain in Mexico in India O Father Abraham
puny business men reading newspapers thinking to tell us
down on your knees!

Soviet soviet

our hands in the sky in the sea in the earth making things grow
shut off the power shut off the power bridges roads tunnels trolleys
our factories our farms What's the answer? when you're down
on your knees with your mouth stuffed with worn-out views lazy
bastards without the courage to see the deepringing beauty left to
us without the guts or heart to march in millions keeping step with
all that's gone before making it live making it ours O huge epic
time men

up from your knees your books your prisoncots Avenge
your girl your youth make them pay

because of millions ready
to break the back of this muddle-born world

Young men

We must not fail.

We cannot fail.

• THIS EARLY DAY

Before the braces give, the cripple eased to earth;
Before barrage and barricade emerge
 us
Conquerors of time and men, or leave us
Models for a better maker, propellers of a surer motion,
Masters in a stricter sense — alive or dead;
Before the casual trucks tear up the farms
Whose yield we saw deflect to smoke and mortgage;
Before the cables under submarines announce
The latest prices paid betrayers and priests;
Before the heavy anger of the howitzers levels
The factories and freighters; before the super-super
Gas gets the robot-pilot, thereby
Alleviating any technical flaw in ground defense
 or spoiling the Ph. D. of any relativity;
Before the streets are cleared; before the firing starts;
Before danger, or victory's danger —

Before . . . how are we lost?
We are that thing for which we fight.
We are the deepest task of centuries; lucky
To stand where we stand, hardy
To weather all they can give who have taken
The every weight of a more hopeless war
 since the day we were born. O we are not
Afraid of wounds we've always had. O death
Is a minor thing to those who've never lived.

After the braces give; after the cripple
 is eased to earth

In my house the stars accumulate Conquerors!

• THE MOVABLE JOURNEY

Now we serve and are assaulted; civic pride
Is not for us. This Ivar Kruger day
Assists no turn to ghost's defy, no lake
Of sorrow leaving play for puppet-sleep.

Keep confidence in sacrifice of spirit.
Our law conforms to daring flight
of commonplace: this land
That serves assembled peace to fools
Is yet a buried deep of flowers piled,
And grain in earth's more active enterprise.

The energy of ground provokes no dream
Of hunted death, no hint of graves
in open past;
Through best defiant court of time
What's good comes now to us — not ever
growth has been the easy sneer
Of envy's culture-snob — O cloth of hills
the wanted clear
And stream of cloud this school of given house
the solemn heart
We serve can surely take assault
Of moment-emptiness. This day returns to find
The cities peoples living
Flesh of stars the firmament of joy
In first vast stir of a jangling eternity
Of fellowship and spring where good and law
Is thicker love and every day shall spawn a god.

• PICK UP THE EVENING PAPER

What is it we want: not battleships
Or hand-grenades to haunt the marshy fog
Of memory; swinging lights and snowflake
Fires taking station in the quarter where
Is Shakespeare's head — a hopeless smile
Upon the face, now shifted out of memory
And swinging down
 against this market-ruin
With only sight of hellshaped charity
Written blearily over the toad-fouled wreckage
Of world when children we loved.

What is it we want: pick up the evening paper.
Have we support? time? this is no quiet
 darkness blowing down
 O pattern of time
In cardboard in shirt of black and brown O pardon doubt
Now sound of storming lovely lead now crumble fall now
 smashing to
Hell all doubt. The underdog has found his fleas has eaten all.

• A LETTER ON THANKSGIVING

Praise flow and flowing cease:

our quarrel

Is thinned to phrase; has stooped to common case.
The battles all are marketed and shipped
Like nuts to squirrel; while armies
Spring like silhouettes of yellow Great —
Assassins' humble grace — their retching sour rage
Is splendid harvest: spree of vanity and Right.

O progress bear no moody stop. No sign

Is borne or shown of baffled place

In further search. Prepare conclusion's

Mirrored Spring; the horn of plenty in your head.

Hate thrive and thriving flower

There are the million unimportant years: there is this hour.

We hae plighted our troth, my Mary,
In mutual affection to join,
And curst be the cause that shall part us!
The hour and the moment o' time.

ROBERT BURNS

• *Comrades, the Red Woman!*
she is the timeless bride of all our loving.

• FAREWELL TO THE BLUEWOMAN*

The bitter veins reject the dream, dismiss the fire,
Betray the whetted mange. O shine
In shadow, holy myth. (Tattered hands
Extend forgotten myths forever.) For some
we'll count the stars as beads for thee!

I come for thee not as flesh but as night
Thy lover, folding heart with foam in heat
To strain a prayer with veils: great heart
 that zooms
In pain, O we in distant trust are spared no beat.
What climbs the deep aloft from thee . . . 'tis thee!
Thy coasting thighs have room
To span the "what is not" with now, "must be."
What though the swarming fleets are crying doom,
Thy nursing sheets in softness cover them;
Or cast the bodies forth in righteous phlegm
 . . . bluewoman prone in ecstasy . . .
They loved, they breathed, they hoped . . . our scorn, O sea.
All blurred in sullen sleep
Strange eyes are skating steep
 unwitness to
The leprous scud streaming in the charge

* This poem is included in this place because of the immediate message to be found in the title (though no proper application derives from the poem itself); and for an extended reason, my motivation is one of sentiment . . . that sentiment which one feels for his earliest efforts.

Of slithering green plate
Upon the dripping lips O pistoned glory-barge
Thy tears are spilled in love to dash a pigmy gate.

Dark sweetness weaving
Dynamos of lily and the rose; the architecture
Of sleep, what eye has truly followed it
And told one plan, one path revealed
of shepherd-feet
That tend what flocks in pastures there.

Ave maiden
Thy frantic voice is pitched to rot the heart.
Endless shadow strain . . . moist warm hair . . .
For you no birth, no death: a terrible driving
That drives the driven with the driver.

She moves in pride and nothingness.
O maiden-myth, thy burnished arms
are more beautiful than death
is beautiful. O foam-voice
why doubt? it shall ever be

Not lonely.
Behold the flashing bride in her plight
I come for thee not as flesh but as night.
From petty loves of bone and gold we haunt' thy bed.
O harlot sea, thy gift is real, and every bead is said.

The Bluewoman has passed the outer post.
Disconsolate ankles range a countless ghost
As with a lovely sweep she smooths her hair

She does not know that I am sleeping there.
I rest.

Ora pro nobis.

She deftly comforts me.
Never thy cruelty, O kinetsea
beautiful must be
Coasting in thy blueness sleep sleep.

• JOE HILL LISTENS TO THE PRAYING

Look at the steady rifles, Joe.
It's all over now — “Murder, first degree,”
The jury said. It's too late now
To go back. Listen Joe, the chaplain is reading:

*Lord Jesus Christ who didst
So mercifully promise heaven
To the thief that humbly confessed
His injustice*

throw back your head

Joe; remember that song of yours
We used to sing in jails all over
These United States — tell it to him:
“I'll introduce to you
A man that is a credit to our Red, White
and Blue,
His head is made of lumber and solid as
a rock;
He is a Christian Father and his name is
Mr. Block.”

Remember, Joe —

“You take the cake,
You make me ache,
Tie a rock on your block and jump
in the lake,
Kindly do that for Liberty's sake.”

*Behold me, I beseech Thee, with
The same eyes of mercy that*

on the other

Hand we're driftin' into Jungles
From Kansas to the coast, wrapped

round brake beams on a thousand
freights; San Joaquin and Omaha
brush under the wheels — “God made the summer
for the hobo and the bummer” — we've been
everywhere, seen everything.

Winning the West for the good citizens;
Driving golden spikes into the U. P.;
Harvest hands, lumbermen drifting —
 now Iowa, now Oregon —
God, how clean the sky; the lovely wine
Of coffee in a can. This land
 is our lover. How greenly beautiful
Her hair; her great pure breasts
 that are
The Rockies on a day of mist and rain.

We love this land of corn and cotton,
 Virginia and Ohio, sleeping on
With our love, with our love —
O burst of Alabama loveliness, sleeping on
In the strength of our love; O Mississippi flowing
Through our nights, a giant mother.

Pardon, and in the end

 How green is her hair,
 how pure are her breasts; the little farms
 nuzzling into her flanks
 drawing forth life, big rich life
Under the deep chant of her skies

And rivers — but we, we're driftin'
Into trouble from Kansas to the coast, clapped
 into the stink and rot of country jails
 and clubbed by dicks and cops

Because we didn't give a damn —

remember Joe

How little we cared, how we sang
 the nights away in their filthy jails;

and how, when

We got wind of a guy called Marx
 we sang less, just talked
And talked. "Blanket-stiffs" we were
But we could talk, they couldn't jail us
For that — but they did —

remember Joe

Of my life be strengthened

One Big Union:

our convention in Chi; the Red Cards,
leaflets; sleeping in the parks,
the Boul' Mich; "wobblies" now, cheering
the guys that spoke our lingo, singing
down the others. "Hear that train blow,
Boys, hear that train blow."

Now confessing my crimes, I may obtain

Millions of stars, Joe — millions of miles.

Remember Vincent St. John
In the Goldfield strike; the timid little squirt
 with the funny voice, getting onto the platform
 and slinging words at us that rolled

down our chins and into our hearts,
like boulders hell-bent down a mountain side.

And Orchard, angel of peace
— with a stick of dynamite in either hand.

Pettibone and Moyer: "The strike
Is your weapon, to hell with politics."

Big Bill — remember him —
At Boise — great red eye rolling like a lame bull
through the furniture and men
of the courtroom — "This bastard,
His Honor."

Hobo Convention:
(Millions of stars, Joe — millions of miles.)

"Hallelujah, I'm a bum,
Hallelujah, I'm a bum." His Honor,
the sonofabitch!

One Big Strike, Lawrence, Mass —
23,000 strong, from every neck
of every woods in America, 23,000,
Joe, remember. "We don't need
a leader. We'll fix things up
among ourselves."

"Blackie" Ford and "Double-nose" Suhr in
Wheatland — "I. W. W.'s don't destroy
property" — and they got life. "I've counted
The stars, boys, counted a million of these prison bars."

San Diego, soap boxes,
Hundreds of them! And always
their jail shutting out the sky,
the clean rhythm of the wheels

on a fast freight; disinfectant getting
into the lung-pits, spitting blood
But singing — Christ, how we sang,
remember the singing
Joe, One Big Union,
One Big
hope to be
With Thee

What do they matter, Joe, these rifles.
They can't reach the towns, the skies, the songs,
that now are part of more
than any of us — we were
The homeless, the drifters, but, our songs
had hair and blood on them.
There are no soap boxes in the sky.
We won't eat pie, now, or ever
when we die,
but Joe
We had something they didn't have:
our love for these States
was real and deep;
to be with Thee

In heaven. Amen.

(How steady are
the rifles.) We had slept
naked on this earth on the coldest nights
listening to the words of a guy named Marx.
Let them burn us, hang us, shoot us,
Joe Hill,
For at the last we had what it takes
to make songs with.

• PINNING THE TAIL ON THE DONKEY

If given space
To close on this

Note: no need to rig it out with funny

Hops or jumps to please the nice

And warm the parlor-janes the fifty-

Bucks-a-weekers the wily poop-and-peepers
God pretty

God pretty

Soft picking

Winners If given leave

To close on this:

None knows so well (they got him with a clever

Muzzle-loader: took them about thirty

minutes to get the blood off their pants but it was good for three full hour lectures besides some swell

Shots for the newsreel one unusually fine

Example of close-up technique with just the proper

Hook to get the jitter-lovers

(going)

So willing no grass

Beneath the foot that shows a balance

Walking hard

into the year of hitlerdeath into the yes
to fight

And see the hands show stand

against the previous say of bursting
lungs against the precious sonofa
bitch they've made of a world whose rivers

Only flow to clean the sweat we'll raise whose mountains
Only mean a nearer sky
 whose sun and wind and rain
Can only shine and pelt and blow
An honest downright new way when we take it over.

• CHANT: NOT A SOLO
BUT A SCENE OF ACTION

A subtle whisper opening under ground a silent guard
a stealthy whirring all is well along the line the wires
quiver under the strain of words assuring us that all
is well that each shall be won that every man is wise
and good

and something comes into the sun before our eyes
before our opened eyes the strong of earth from underground
from under their feet from under their blows the fault
we all have known fades

we shall not wait much longer they said the weak inherit
earth they said the last be first

and something stabs into the sun before our opened eyes
the size of fleets the numbers of men the latest lullaby
for murder the silk cases for rifles the foam on the lips
of the statesman and the battleships swing their pounders
round the men move through the camps mining screams
unlimbering those rifles the silk hat on the platform
unwinds that old glory like a conjuror releasing
a rabbit relaying the rattle of death to our throats

for death is something like a rabbit the people say
from the gloom and the grime of your iniquity
from your huts and hackneyed ways of starving
from the shame and the shove of your inequality
that great beast shall bring you peace and plenty
for the killers and something says it's no go

for the orators a subtle whisper opening underground
a silent guard
growing

that every man is wise to know his brothers

Bring on the killers the wires hum with a definite wisdom
there's nothing to join we are the union the thing to joy in
they are recruiting the starspangled Swastika bring on
the remarkable call of an etherized crow that stands
on its tail proclaiming how tall he has grown
there's no time for crinoline gowns for truce with mama-men
no time for crows or rabbits

that every man is good to know his brothers

in the quiet in the lull the quagmire of noise seeths
to a head the bubble-voices stir the hair along the scalp
it's puffing up the dung heap spreads for explosion
what are you waiting for?

the maps skid across the polished tables the lists
like needles drain men knuckles thud against the door
the lauditory messages are drawn up steel nails rain
upon the coffintops all ready all willing we plan to move
at dawn the enemy is camped in a nice little valley
our planes can make it neatly Fall in we must get started
early all out for God and glory thunders across
the hills the trench-guns glisten under the show
of medals on bellies above desks behind the front
the generals belch and the grass shows gain of an inch
the markets and banks are safe for a while and it's

interesting to know that guns are democratic and will kill
just as well when the war is our own
What are you waiting for

for Man is a sun to open all morning in you

O long scaly neck leaning over the place of our graves
the bulging eyes and the bloated words booming
on through jail-walls and into the streets of the rich
we're not pretty we're as ugly as hell coming out of the holes
they dug for us to live in we're proud of our hardness
we've been picked to live because we could not die
they could not kill us even when our own were turned
against us they can not make a dent in the iron faces
we've grown in the cellar of the world we've got
no pretty job to do we are the ugly logic whose beautiful
bones shall be the frame of all the body of wonder
which we can never know

and the sun turning in and the eyes looking up
for the wonder of quiet is the noise it will take
to satisfy the silent who have waited too long

you think it a joke you can't get it straight
you won't see it through

what are you waiting for

it's no go for the gamekeepers with their monster rabbit
no dice for the ridiculous dying crow
it's no sale no sellers no buyers The jig's up
game's over tickets all sold out it's no loss
it's time to laugh what could have fooled us so long

what could have meant so much
what did
the Emperor's New Clothes cost us?

put out your right arm fist
front

eyes full of hardness did you see the maimed
the starved the tortured ears designed to hear
the witchery of autumn wind in fields of golden wheat
the fog-blown bleat of gentle stirring sheep
the easy breathing of the earth did you hear
the screams the groans the gracious love-calling
of the sub-machine guns the mother-murmuring
of tanks and artillery where can you get Aladdin's Lamp
Proxo the ear-phone supreme the crystal gazer goose
steps not wisely but

put out your right arm fist clenched
front

a little while to hold
there's no one able no one quite fit no one great enough
to tell you that Man
is a sun is the silent guard on earth
a little while to hold your fists
front
there's nothing to say
Man is enough for men to build the world by.

• THE TRIAL: A MIXED CHORUS
AND CHOICE OF VOICES

Stones under foot stars overhead and the trial
goes on the judge the jury wait while tier on tier
of steel and dark retain the blood and the bodies
of those condemned to die

I want you to meet I want you to make amends
to meet to make amends presenting Amos
Elephant the choice the chosen of the gods
I want you to speak I want you to say the words
after me after the stars are out and cold

 after grass

has claimed our cities after the long deep bodies
are dust and after where you were and what you are
are little words in books
which no one reads when nothing matters
after all and the faces lift the eyes look back
the speaker's voice grows thin and the thunder
and rattle of heavy guns make much of you

 now listen

now listen I want you to quit I want you to squawk
like chickens under this knife

I want you to know that it does not matter
what happens I want you to remember that nothing
counts now that something good is abroad on earth
at last

at last we know the answer we've got
the number we need nothing now that he is here
 presenting Amos Elephant
the modern god the male-goddess the hope and end

of Western earth the logical choice the chosen giant
leave everything to him put everything into his hands
let's walk with him beside those still waters let him
anoint our heads let the cup run over let the lying down
begin

I say repeat these words hail Amos
full of guts the lean are with you O blessed
is the fruit of thy world

An interesting sidelight brought before the jury was the case of a man unarmed but earnest his words.

I want to sell the sky I want to sell the earth
with all the rivers lakes and hills with all the towns
and mountains seas and plains
thrown in

what am I bid? now who will buy?
it's Jim and George and Sal and Slim
to meet to make amends provoking John G.
Law and order out militia mustardgas and
mind you keep your konk clean of thought
though all roads lead nowhere and no one squawks
while trombones blare that kindly light

your cigs are out your shoes are through what did you bid? I want no part of it I want to pick a cozy spot in heaven so help me

Tim and Grace and Sue and Shorty

bidding

for the whole of earth for the why of the sun
the where of the clouds and the roll of the thunder
O clean and bright and calm and big a few
of us to start the ball rolling

watch that ball roll don't wait for penny-whistles
you are the signal you are the game you are the goal
don't wonder at the cost already you've offered more
than anything is worth

To Amos Elephant the credit the case is closed
that noise you hear, judge
we're building a coffin we're bursting our lungs
singing at a funeral
he wanted to take the earth with all the rivers
lakes and hills with all the towns and all
the mountains seas and plains thrown in
and he can have them and he can take them
where he's going
for we need nothing of his
for we shall have it new for we shall have it now
and ever new *in us*
And they built a monster and they bragged
that our millions would give him life
they issued weapons and orders
and we turned them we turned them
full around
and that's the noise you hear that scream of press
and splatter of ink
the case is closed for Amos Elephant

no clowning now
and thus we leave the darling louse alone with all
the earth opening into flower into the long deep flame
of our bodies
the splendid word upon our coins Comrade.

• A WORLD WHOSE SUN RETREATS
BEFORE THE BRAVE

The greater light is set, my love; our fitful lamp
Has lost its station, has left its little meaning, blame.
Magnificent the harvest; the heart that mocked at camp
And followers has learned another language, name.
Those see the glory better, love, whose world in dying
Cleaned the man in them; upon the rotten waters, bread
They cast, returned; within the scope of self their trying
Clogged the earth with words — these new use fists instead.

What matter what is done to us: the manner counts
For little: things we say are said in newer tone,
Their message fails to set a style for murder, calls,
And calling, cancels use for heirs. This is the time
For us to live. Our sons shall find their private guide
As hostile to the fathers as ever we our own.
We know the plow of change is turning public good
Into a soil of harder stamp, into a flower of stone.

Get up before the sun, O love, the hills of heaven
Lean upon your face; the glens and gullies shimmer
In their blue; the ground and sky are growing heavy
With press of light; all talk is stilled, all time is summer.
Far out, beyond this common scene and country of words,
The dam breaks; we try to stem the flood, the silver wonder.
Standing close together, new, our heads are split by birds
Returning home to the silent lands of our wilderness.

Who were the property of every dunce and prophet,
Of every gust of wind, of every goutish giant on earth,

Are come now to claim ourselves and the profit
Of an ownership which has been our own since birth.
We are not cool: our hate has made us wise, not clever.
Beloved, listen, the stirring of life from the grave —
The heart breaks with the groan and the grind of a lever
Which lifts a world whose very sun retreats before the brave.

Date Due

811.5
P294 b
c. 2

Before the brave, main
811.5P294b C.2



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KEEP CARD IN POCKET

Date Due

